

Attorney Docket No. 21180.00

IN THE APPLICATION
OF
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FOR A
BARRETTE FOR ANIMAL HAIR

BARRETTE FOR ANIMAL HAIR

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional
5 Patent Application Serial No. 60/409,597, filed September 11,
2002.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to hair retention
10 devices, and more particularly to barrettes for animal hair.

2. DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

Barrettes to retain hair are well known. They have been
used for many years to keep long hair neat and away from hazards.
15 They are simultaneously used as ornamentation. There are some
drawbacks with existing devices, however.

Barrettes frequently slip out of place. This is so
particularly when the hair clipped in the barrette is short or
fine, such as with animals or young children. Barrettes will
20 slip out of place in such cases because the barrettes are held in
place simply by the clamping force of the barrette. The leaf
springs used in barrettes work well to hold the hair and

themselves in place when the amount and volume of hair is sufficient to place adequate tension on the springs. Again, this tension may not be achieved when the hair is short or fine. Several ideas have been used to overcome this problem.

5 Rubber material has long been used to prevent barrette slippage. The shortcomings with rubber are that it dries out and loses its high coefficient of friction over time. Further, oil from the wearer's hair can accumulate and destroy the nonslip properties as well.

10 Another attempt to prevent barrette slippage was to incorporate a comb into the barrette. Though the combs do provide a greater surface area for gripping hair, they are not made of a nonslip material, and the improvement is inadequate when the hair is short or fine.

15 Still another attempt was to incorporate interlocking, toothed blocks onto the facing sides of the device's jaws. This adds unnecessary weight and complexity in manufacturing and were often bulky, the bulkiness being emphasized by the wearer's short or fine hair.

20 U.S. Patent Number 2,661,748, issued to Matilda A. Racho in January 1952, describes a barrette with a tubular, nonslip member around the spring that bears against the wearer's hair.

25 U.S. Patent Number 3,841,340, issued to Nathan L. Solomon in October 1974, describes a hair clasp device that includes a toothed arm to engage hair more positively.

U.S. Patent Number 5,996,593, issued to Heidi Christine Horman in December 1999, describes a hair clip that includes interlocking rubber blocks located on the inward-facing sides of the clip's jaws. The blocks introduce unnecessary complexity in that they must be aligned to function properly.

None of the above patents describes a barrette that provides nonslip properties sufficient for use in short or fine animal hair, and that uses the hook side of hook and loop material to achieve those goals. Traditionally, barrettes are worn by those with hair long enough to need some control, in addition to the ornamental value. Those with long hair ordinarily would stay away from the hazards of hook material. It can easily tangle in longer hair. At the other end of the spectrum, those with short or fine hair experience difficulty wearing conventional barrettes. The clamping action of the conventional barrettes is insufficient for short or fine hair. The use of a non-slip material with a high surface area counteracts that shortcoming. The use of hook material with a barrette goes against the conventional wisdom, but is uniquely suited for use with short or fine hair. Thus, there is a need for a barrette for short or fine animal hair that incorporates those attributes.

None of the above inventions and patents, taken either singly or in combination, is seen to describe the instant invention as claimed.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The barrette for animal hair provides a device for securing and decorating short and fine hair of animals, particularly dogs, and of young children. The barrette includes a leaf spring clamp made of an upper spring and a lower spring. The leaf spring clamp has a hinge at one end and a clasp at the opposite end. The clasp releasably closes the leaf spring clamp. A piece of non-slip material, preferably the hook fabric of a hook and loop material, is affixed to the upper spring.

Accordingly, it is a principal object of the invention to provide a barrette that positively engages the wearer's hair.

It is another object of the invention to disclose a barrette that resists slippage.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a barrette that incorporates hooked fabric, from one side of hook and loop material, to provide friction against the wearer's hair.

It is an object of the invention to provide improved elements and arrangements thereof in an apparatus for the purposes described which is inexpensive, dependable and fully effective in accomplishing its intended purposes.

These and other objects of the present invention will become readily apparent upon further review of the following specification and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is an environmental, perspective view of a barrette for animal hair according to the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of an open barrette for animal hair according to the present invention.

5 Fig. 3 is a perspective view of a closed barrette for animal hair according to the present invention.

Fig. 4 is a side view of an open barrette according to the present invention.

10 Fig. 5 is a side view of a closed barrette according to the present invention.

Fig. 6 is a perspective view of the barrette for animal hair according to the present invention bearing a decorative ornamentation.

15 Similar reference characters denote corresponding features consistently throughout the attached drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The present invention is a barrette for animal hair, designated generally as 10 in the drawings. Referring to Fig. 1, 20 the barrette for animal hair 10 is shown clamped to a dog's hair, atop the head and between the ears. The short, fine dog's hair is notoriously difficult to control with conventional barrettes.

Turning now to Figs. 2-5, the barrette for animal hair 10 is generally a leaf spring clamp incorporating a piece of non-slip

material 24 to increase the grip of the barrette to fine hair, such as the hair of an animal or child.

The leaf spring clamp is comprised of an upper spring 12 pivotally attached to a lower spring 16. The upper spring 12 includes a support 13, having a decorative side and a clamp side, and a spring member 14 disposed on the clamp side of the support 13.

A first end of the upper spring 12 is pivotally joined to a first end of the lower spring 16 by a hinge 18, allowing the upper spring 12 and the lower spring 16 to pivot between open and closed positions. Figs. 2 and 4 illustrate the barrette for animal hair 10 in the open position, and Figs. 3 and 5 illustrate the barrette for animal hair 10 closed.

A clasp coupler 20 is located near a second end of the upper spring 12 opposite the hinge 18. A clasp catch 22 is located near a second end of the lower spring 16, opposite the hinge 18, so that the clasp coupler 20 and the clasp catch 22 can be engaged when the upper spring 12 and the lower spring 16 are placed in the closed position. A piece of non-slip material 24 is affixed to the spring member 14 of the upper spring 12. The non-slip material 24 is preferably a hooked fabric of the type used in hook and loop fastening material.

The use of hooked fabric makes the barrette for animal hair 10 uniquely appropriate for animal hair or the short, fine hair of a child. The non-slip material 24 is attached to the spring member 14 of the upper spring 12 by an adhesive that will not

allow the non-slip material 24 to detach from the spring member 14.

The open barrette for animal hair 10 is placed in the wearer's hair in the desired position, and a lock of hair is held across the upper spring 12 or the lower spring 16. The barrette for animal hair 10 is then latched closed by bringing the clasp coupler 20 into engagement with the clasp catch 22. As the upper spring 12 and the lower spring 16 are closed together, the wearer's hair is forced into the non-slip material 24. The non-slip material 24 grips the wearer's hair with the assistance of spring tension between the spring member 14 and the lower spring 16. When the barrette for animal hair 10 is latched into place, it is extremely resistant to slippage. When hooked fabric is used as the non-slip material 24, the wearer's hair is forced between the hooks by the squeezing action of the leaf spring clamp. The wearer's hair is in contact with a tremendous number of hooks of the hooked fabric, comprising a large surface area, greatly improving the barrette's resistance to slippage.

Referring to Fig. 4, the curvature of the spring member 14 and the lower spring 16 while the barrette for animal hair 10 is open is evident. Upon closing the barrette for animal hair 10, as seen in Fig. 5, the spring member 14 and the lower spring 16 are forced together, flattening each under compression and holding the wearer's hair tightly. The tension between the spring member 14 and the lower spring 16 is greatly aided by the

non-slip material 24 to prevent the barrette for animal hair 10 from falling out of short or fine hair.

The barrette for animal hair 10 is seen in Fig. 6 with a decorative ornament 26 disposed on the support 13 of the upper spring 12.

It is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the sole embodiment described above, but encompasses any and all embodiments within the scope of the following claims.